CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE EASTERN EUROPEAN CHURCHES

from the East-European desk of the World Council of Churches

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Introduction

The present number of "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" begins with the official accounts of the visit of the World Council of Churches' delegates to the Churches of the USSR.* This is followed by a report on the ecumenical movement published in the Journal of the Russian Baptists. The rest of the number covers a selection of anti-religious articles recently published in the USSR.

On the one hand these articles stress the need for Communist Party ideology to combat religion. On the other hand they insist that this same ideology must not hurt the feelings of religious citizens - this principle being laid down officially by the Constitution.

The ideological struggle against religion must be understood as the deliberate task of expressing the superiority of the Marxist-Communist ideology over the religious view of life, and giving it practical proof.

At the same time, in accordance with the Soviet Constitution, which guarantees freedom of conscience to all citizens, both believers and non-believers, believers are to be treated with the same confidence as non-believers.

Thus every Church and every religion has the legal right to remain true to its religious tradition, so long as it does not overstep the legally-defined limits of freedom of worship.

The atheist press therefore insists on better methods of combatting religion. By better methods it means trying to make the anti-religious principle stronger, so as to convince believing citizens of the truth contained in atheist ideology.

The self-criticism of atheism in insisting on patience in overcoming religious superstition requires great discretion from those responsible for anti-religious propaganda. It is stated that such patience is conspicuous by its absence in the activities of some of the advocates of atheism.

Religion must and will die out. This basic conviction of organised atheism is stressed all the more; while at the same time the feelings of religious believers are to receive consideration.

* Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate, No 2, 1960

Christian Encounters

World Council of Churches Delegation Visits USSR

From December 3 to 18, 1959, a delegation of the World Council of Churches, consisting of the following persons, visited the USSR:

Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (Netherlands Reformed Church), General Secretary of the World Council of Churches and leader of the delegation; Dr. Otto Frederick Nolde (United Lutheran Church in America), Associate General Secretary of the WCC, and Director of the Commission of the Churches for International Affairs; the Rev. Francis House (Church of England), Associate General Secretary of the WCC, Director of the Division of Ecumenical Action; U Kyaw Than (Burma Baptist Convention), Associate General Secretary of the East Asia Christian Conference; Dr. Nikos Nissiotis (Church of Greece), Assistant Director of the Ecumenical Institute at Bossey, near Geneva; Alexander Fedorovitch Weymarn (Orthodox Church of the Western European Exarchate of the Moscow Patriarchate, Geneva), Research Officer in the WCC.

Moscow

The delegation reached Moscow on December 3rd, 1959. It was welcomed at Vnukovo airport by the President of the Moscow Patriarchate's office for inter-church relations, Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsy and Kolomna, the Vice-President of the office for inter-church relations, Archimandrite Nikodim, Archpriest Vitaly N. Borovoy, lecturer at the Leningrad Theological Academy, A.S. Buevskij, member of the inter-church relations office and other staff-members of the Moscow Patriarchate. The Government Council for relations with the Orthodox Church was represented by P.G. Cheredniak, Vice-President of the Council.

At the airport, Metropolitan Nikolai and Dr. Visser 't Hooft, who led the delegation, exchanged warm greetings. The delegation stayed at the Hotel "Sovietskaia". It visited the Patriarchate the same day, where it was welcomed by Metropolitan Nikolai.

At the reception, the programme for the delegation's visit in the USSR was established.

The reception was followed by a banquet in honour of the delegation, at which Metropolitan Nikolai and Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft greeted one another very cordially.

Towards the end of the day the delegation attended solemn Vespers (on the eve of the presentation of Mary in the Temple) at the Cathedral of the Patriarchate, where they were introduced to Patriarch Alexius of Moscow and All Russia.

The next day (Friday) the delegates attended a liturgy in the Church of the Transfiguration conducted by Metropolitan Nikolai, assisted by the Cathedral clergy. After the liturgy the Metropolitan spoke very movingly to the delegation. Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft replied in an address to the congregation.

The delegates then visited an exhibition of economic achievements of the USSR, and spent the evening at the Bolshoi Theatre where Glinka's opera "Ruslan and Ludmilla" was being performed.

On the Saturday the delegates visited the Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra (Abbey). After an audience with the Abbot, Archimandrite Pimen, the delegates attended the liturgy in the Refectory Church (Trapezny Khram), and a Te Deum celebrated in the Holy Trinity Church, and visited churches and other places of interest at the Abbey. They also visited the Theological College and the Theological Seminary at Moscow, and had talks with the Dean, Protohierei K.I. Rushitzky, the Inspector, Archimandrite Pitirim, and members of the teaching staff of the two theological institutes. After visiting the Academy and the Christian Archaeological Museum, the delegates were invited to a meal with the professors and tutors, followed by a religious concert given by the students' choir. After the concert, Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft gave a short address to the students.

The visit culminated in a reception given by His Holiness, Patriarch Alexius of Moscow and All Russia, in the Patriarch's residence. During the reception, a conversation took place between the Patriarch and Dr. Visser 't Hooft. Dr. Nikos Nissiotis delivered a personal message from Patriarch Athenagoras of Constantinople to Patriarch Alexius of Moscow.

On their return to Moscow, the delegates visited the All-Soviet Council of Baptists and Evangelical-Christians and took part in their prayer-meeting.

The delegation was welcomed by J.I. Shidkov, President of the Council, and A.V. Karev, its General Secretary. Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft and U Kyaw Than expressed the greetings of the delegation.

Leningrad

In the night of December 6th the delegates travelled to Leningrad by the express train "Krasnaia Zwesda" (Red Star). On their arrival the delegates were welcomed by Bishop Alexius of Luga, Protohierei S. Rumiantzev (Secretary of the Metropolitan of Leningrad), A. Medvedsky (Prior of Nikolsky Cathedral) and Protohierei V. Kotliarov (a member of Leningrad Theological College).

On their first day in Leningrad the delegates attended the liturgical service conducted by Metropolitan Pitirim of Leningrad and Ladoga (in memory of St. Alexander Nevsky). They then attended a reception given by the Metropolitan.

They spent the evening at the opera-house named after S.M. Kirov.

The next day (Monday) the guests visited the city of Leningrad including several churches: Nikolsky Cathedral, Preobrashensky Cathedral, St. Vladimir Cathedral (named after the holy Duke Vladimir) as well as the treasures of the Hermitage. In the evening they attended a religious concert given by the Metropolitan choir, devoted to the music of G. Smolensky.

Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. N. Nissiotis gave short addresses to the audience.

On their last day in Leningrad (Tuesday, December 8th) the delegates visited the Fortress-Cathedral of St. Peter and St. Paul, and the Leningrad Theological Academy and Seminary. Here they were welcomed by Professor L.N. Pariisky, Inspector at the Academy (the Dean, Professor M. Sperantsky, being prevented by illness). Dr. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. Nissiotis expressed warm greetings to the students, and the delegates had an opportunity for conversations with the Professors at the Academy and the Seminary.

Before leaving Leningrad, the delegates were invited by Metropolitan Pitirim to a banquet, at which very cordial speeches were made by the Metropolitan and by Dr. Visser 't Hooft.

Riga

The same evening the delegates took the plane to Riga.

In Riga they were received by the administrator of the Orthodox Diocese of Riga, Bishop John of Tallinn and Estonia, by Dr. Gustav Turs, Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Latvia, by Dr. Jan Kiivit, Archbishop of the Evangelical-Lutheran Church of Esthonia, by A.A. Sacharov (representatives of the "Council for the Affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church to the USSR Council of Ministers"), and J.F. Restberg, Director of the "Council for Religious Associations".

On Wednesday, the 9th December, the delegates visited Archbishop G. Turs and Bishop John. They also saw the Orthodox Convent at Riga and the Theological and Pastoral Training-College belonging to the Lutheran Church of Latvia, and a number of other Orthodox and Lutheran churches. They also went down to the sea at Riga where they met some members of the Lutheran church at Dubulty (in the home of the local Lutheran pastor). In the evening they attended a service in the Orthodox Cathedral at Riga, and participated in the solemn Lutheran service in the Church of Saint Gertrude. At the latter short sermons were preached by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft and Dr. O.F. Nolde.

The next day Bishop John and Archbishop Turs paid a return visit to Dr. Visser 't Hooft. Then the delegates were officially received by the President of the Soviet of the town of Riga, Baumanis. They also visited the exhibition of Latvian products, the national cemetery and the grave of the first Lutheran Archbishop of Latvia. After which they were invited to a farewell dinner by Bishop John.

On the same day they took the plane to Moscow. The next day (Friday) they had a friendly talk with the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna. Then they visited the Tretiakov Gallery. On the same day they left Moscow by plane for Erevan (Armenian SSR).

Erevan

In Erevan they were welcomed by Archbishop Saak (President of the Supreme Council of the Armenian Church), Bishop Komitas (head of the diocese of the Armenian Church in Grusia), Archimandrite Vagan (head of the diocese of Erevan), and Gaik Aratulian (administrator of the Chancellery of the Catholicate).

Etchmiadzin

The same day the delegates went on to Etchmiadzin, where they visited the famous Cathedral with its treasures, the theological academy of the Armenian Church, and met the students and lecturers and Bishop Aikazun (Dean of the Academy). They also visited the ancient church of Saint Ripsimia and the historic ruins of Zvartnotz, and were received by Vasgen I, the Supreme Patriarch Catholikos of the Armenians, where Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, the Rev. Francis House and Archimandrite Nikodim replied to the greetings of the Patriarch. The delegates spent the evening at the theatre in Erevan, which is devoted to ballet and opera.

The next day (Sunday) the delegates visited the treasury of old Armenian manuscripts - the famous Menanteran Library - and looked round the town of Erevan. They visited one of the churches and attended the solemn liturgy in the Cathedral of Etchmiadzin. The new altar in the Cathedral was dedicated, and the service was conducted by Patriarch Catholikos, assisted by the Archbishops and many of the clergy of the Armenian Church. During the service the Patriarch addressed a greeting to the delegation.

After the liturgy a conversation was held at the Patriarch's residence between the delegates and His Holiness Vasgen I on the question of mutual relations between the World Council of Churches and the Armenian Church. This was followed by a dinner in honour of the delegation, held in the theological academy, at which toasts were exchanged.

Moscow

On the Monday morning (14th December) the delegation left Erevan by plane for Moscow. Next day they visited the Kremlin. After which they had a second conversation in the Patriarchate with representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church, led by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna. In the afternoon they visited some of the churches in Moscow - the Church of the Resurrection in Sokolniki, the Church of the Suffering Mother of God in Ordynka, the Church of the Warrior John in Dmitrov Street, and the Slovushti Church in the Briussov-Pereulok. In these churches they had talks with Bishop Pimen of Dmitrov and with the leading priests.

They spent the evening at the Bolshoi Theatre at a performance of Prokovieff's ballet "Romeo and Julietta". On Wednesday, the 16th December, they visited the All-Soviet Lenin Library and the Moscow underground railway. They went on to the University, where they were received by the Assistant Dean, K.I. Iwanov, and had a long conversation with him.

That same evening James H. de Boes, Ambassador of the Netherlands in the USSR, gave a reception in honour of the delegates, attended by the delegation, led by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, by a number of diplomatic representatives in Moscow, and by a group from the Moscow Patriarchate led by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna. The guests also included J.I. Shidkov, President of the All-Soviet Council of the Evangelical-Christian-Baptists.

The day before they left the USSR (Thursday, 17th December) the delegates paid a second visit to the All-Soviet Association of Baptists and Evangelical Christians, and discussed plans for future contacts and mutual relations between their leaders and the World Council of Churches.

After lunch Dr. Visser 't Hooft had a meeting with press-representatives, at which he explained the reason for the delegation's visit to the USSR. In the evening Patriarch Alexius gave an official reception in honour of the delegation. It was attended by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft (General Secretary of the World Council of Churches), Dr. O.F. Nolde (Director of the Commission of the Churches on International Affairs), the Rev. Francis House (Associate General Secretary, and Director of the Division of Ecumenical Action), U Kyaw Tan (Associate General Secretary of the Christian Conference of East Asia), Dr. Nikos Nissiotis (Assistant Director of the Ecumenical Institute, Bossey), A.F. Weymarn (Research Officer of the General Secretariat of the World Council of Churches), His Eminence Metropolitan Nikolai, Bishop Pimen of Dmitrov, Archpriest Koltchizky (the Chargé d'Affaires of the Moscow Patriarchate), Archimandrite Nikodim (representing the President of the Foreign Department for Church Affairs), K.I. Rushitzky (Dean of the Religious Academy in Moscow), Archimandrite Pimen (Abbot of the Troitse-Sergieva Monastery), Alexius (Hieromonakh of the Church of Antioch), Protohierei M.W. Zernov, Archpriest I.M. Maliushitzky, A.W. Vedernikov (Editor of the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate), and other members of the executive staff of the Moscow Patriarchate.

The All-Soviet Council of Baptists and Evangelical Christians was represented at this reception by its President, J.I. Shidkov, and by its General Secretary, A.V. Karev.

The Council for Orthodox Church Affairs in the Council of Ministers of the USSR had sent two of its staff: P.V. Makarzev and L.A. Sereda. During the reception speeches were made by Patriarch Alexius and by Dr. W.A. Visser 't Hooft, expressing their mutual friendliness and goodwill. (Both speeches are published in the "Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate", and also in No 1, 1960 of "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches".)

On Friday, the 18th December, the delegation took the plane back to Geneva. They were accompanied to the airport by Bishop Pimen of Dmitrov, Archimandrite Nikodim, Archpriest V.M. Borovoy, A.S. Buevsky and other outstanding persons, including P.V. Makarzev and L.A. Sereda (from the state Soviet for Orthodox Church Affairs).

The main purpose of the visit of the delegation from the World Council of Churches to the USSR was to acquaint itself with the life of the Russian Orthodox Church and with the general religious situation in the USSR. The visits to the religious centres of the Armenian Church and of the Evangelical-Lutheran Churches, and to the Council of the Baptist-Evangelical-Christians also gave the delegates some idea of the life of these religious bodies.

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It was at Utrecht in 1958 that representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church led by Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna and representatives of the World Council of Churches led by Dr. Franklin Fry (President of its Executive Committee and Central Committee) first considered the idea of a delegation from the World Council of Churches visiting the USSR.

Between the meetings in Utrecht and in Moscow friendly contacts were being extended between the World Council of Churches and the Russian Orthodox Church. In June 1959 at the invitation of the World Council of Churches the Moscow Patriarchate sent two representatives to Geneva in order to study the work of the General Secretariat; and in August 1959 these same representatives attended the meetings of the Central Committee of the World Council of Churches in Rhodes.

The visit to the Geneva secretariat of these two representatives of the Russian Church, Protohierei V. Borovoy and V.S. Alexeev, was a further step towards developing contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches. It helped to make the Russian Church more familiar with the ecumenical movement and with the organisation of the World Council of Churches, which will certainly prove useful to the Moscow Patriarchate in its future relations with the World Council of Churches.

The presence of the two representatives of the Russian Church as observers at the meetings of the Central Committee in Rhodes also strengthened the conviction that the Russian Orthodox Church and its leaders enjoy the sympathy and respect of the other Christian confessions and denominations. And it provided the Foreign Department of the Russian Church with valuable information about the questions discussed at Rhodes.

During the interval between the meeting at Utrecht and the World Council of Churches' visit to Moscow, a definite improvement had taken place in international relations. The meetings in Moscow took place in an atmosphere of belief in the future rapprochement between all men of good will and the establishment of international peace.

The purpose of this meeting was to deepen the mutual understanding between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches, and to promote contacts between them. There is good reason to believe that these aims were achieved, and this will undoubtedly facilitate further exchanges of opinion. The World Council of Churches' delegates and the representatives of the Russian Orthodox Church discussed the following questions in a friendly spirit:

a) The Christian responsibility for the division of Christendom, and the practical measures which ought to be taken in order to overcome that division.

b) The common Christian responsibility for the present international situation, and the practical measures which should be taken in order to improve it.

c) The steps which should be taken in order to extend the contacts between the Russian Orthodox Church and the World Council of Churches in future. Those who took part in these meetings, which

were conducted in a spirit of Christian love, regarded this important event as a gift from God, which makes it incumbent upon both sides to increase their efforts to solve the common Christian problems.

In the Golden Book for visitors to the Moscow Patriarchate the delegation from the World Council of Churches wrote the following appreciation.

"The delegation from the World Council of Churches, consisting of active members of the ecumenical movement from 5 different churches and 6 different countries, express their deep gratitude to His Holiness Patriarch Alexius and to His Eminence Metropolitan Nikolai for their invitation, to visit the Holy Russian Orthodox Church and other Churches in the USSR. The well-planned programme for our visit, the care for our comfort, the exceedingly friendly reception extended to us and the welcome opportunity of participating in the life of the Russian Orthodox Church have left a deep impression upon us, which we shall share with Christians in all countries." Signed by all members of the delegation.

Delegation of the World Council of Churches visits Etchmiadzin (Armenia)

The January number of "Etchmiadzin" (the official publication of the Holy See of the Catholicos of Armenia) contains a long article on the visit paid by the delegation of the World Council of Churches last December to Armenia. We quote a few extracts:

"The delegation was welcomed on arrival by a large group of eminent churchmen and civic dignitaries. After greetings had been exchanged, Dr. Visser 't Hooft (leader of the delegation) spoke as follows:

"As the guests of the Patriarchate of Moscow and of All Russia we have visited the Soviet Union. Our primary aim is to get to know something about the life of the Church in the Soviet Union. Today we stand in an ancient stronghold of the Christian faith. The splendour of the Armenian Church in past centuries is known to everyone. We are happy to stand on the soil of your country and to enjoy the privilege of contemplating Mount Ararat, the eternal holy mountain mentioned in the Bible, which shelters Etchmiadzine at its feet.

"To Your Holiness I should like to say that through some of its representatives the ancient Church of Armenia has made its contribution to the meetings of the World Council of Churches. We recall with pleasure the participation of Archbishop Diran Nersoyan in our meetings, among others. We have seen the fraternal cooperation and goodwill which exists between the Christian Churches in the Soviet Union. Our purpose is to strengthen the links between the Armenian Church and the World Council of Churches and to have more general participation from you in our meetings."

The Catholicos thanked Dr. Visser 't Hooft and replied:

"We too are very glad that your delegation has consented to visit us. We were counting on this visit. We are convinced that contact between Christians is a source of enrichment to the Church as a whole. It is our hope that this 'fraternal cooperation' between our Churches in the Soviet Union may extend to the whole of Christendom. We hope that these ties may be strengthened, for the good of all the Christian Churches in the world. Our thoughts and feelings are in harmony and our prayers go up together to God. Be welcome! and may God be our aid!"

A detailed description is then given of the consecration of the new altar in the Cathedral, and of the visits paid by the World Council of Churches' delegation to the sacred places and architectural monuments, and the warm welcome that they received.

USSR — The Ecumenical Movement Seen Through Baptist Eyes

In its somewhat late second issue, the bi-annual publication of the Union of Baptists and Evangelical Christians in the USSR, "Bratski Vestnik" (Moscow 1960), contains a long article on the ecumenical movement written by A.V. Karev, General Secretary of the Union.

In his introduction, the author refers to the rise of a general desire among Christians all over the world for a universal, "ecumenical" Church as the outstanding characteristic of the 20th century. "This became the guiding principle of the ecumenical movement."

"Historically", Mr. Karev writes, "the first impulse came from the missionary work of the Church, and especially from the Baptist Missionary Society, founded in 1792, which under the leadership of William Carey set out to proclaim the Gospel among all nations. The first "interconfessional" missionary society was the London Missionary Society, in which Congregationalists, Methodists and Episcopalians cooperated."

"This was the first milestone on the road to ecumenical cooperation in all fields.

"Next followed as forerunners of the ecumenical movement important Christian associations and world alliances like the Evangelical Alliance, the Salvation Army, the World's Student Christian Federation, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the Blue Cross, the White Cross and the general street mission.

"The International Missionary Conference held at Edinburgh in 1910 under the leadership of Dr. John R. Mott and the American Bishop D. Brent then paved the way for further experiments.

"In Edindurgh, the idea of a union of Protestant church groups received strong support. The Bishop of the American Episcopal Church strongly advocated the idea of a unified church, "unified not only in the sphere of missionary activity or Church social work, but also in dogmatics and theology".

"In the 20th century, the two world confessional bodies "Life and Work" and "Faith and Order" became the pillars of the ecumenical movement, later merged in the World Council of Churches.

"Already at the World Church Conference held at Lausanne in 1927, which took as its starting-point the Apostolic and Nicene Creeds, the principle was maintained that all three systems of Church administration - Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational had their advantages and should therefore be given their place in the unified Church of the future.

"In 1929, Bishop Brent was replaced by the Archbishop of York, Dr. William Temple. The Second World Church Conference on Faith and Order which he presided over at Edinburgh in 1937, showed more unanimity in respect of questions of faith than of questions of Church order (i.e. the Apostolic Succession, the Sacraments and their effect on salvation, etc.)"

A.V. Karev then describes the experience of "Life and Work", its big conferences at Stockholm (1925) and Oxford (1937), while at the same time making special reference to the World Alliance for International Friendship through the Churches, "which today is also merged in the World Council of Churches."

There follows a description of the World Council of Churches as formed at Amsterdam in 1948 (its basis, membership, functions, rules, organisation, etc.) and its work until the Second Assembly held at Evanston in 1954, where certain differences of opinion on the question of "The Church and the International Order" "led to opposition between the American, John Foster Dulles, and the Czech, Dr. Josef Hromadka."

Dr. Karev goes on to describe the distribution of work among the different Divisions of the World Council of Churches, and names the leading personalities on its Committees. The section closes with the announcement of the Third Assembly of the World Council of Churches to be held at New Delhi in 1961.

A.V. Karev then turns to the Ecumenical Council convened by Pope John XXIII.

"Why has this action of the Pope created such excitement among Christians all over the world?", Karev asks. "Because it was interpreted as a move on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to hold an ecumenical council which would include all the Christian churches in the world, even Protestant churches, and thus to participate in the ecumenical movement led by the World Council of Churches."

"Which churches", Karev asks, "would have been ready to accept an invitation from the Vatican? The Greek Orthodox Churches of the East and some Protestant churches, especially the Reformed Church which during the Calvin centenary in Geneva in the summer of 1959 expressed its willingness to take part in the Ecumenical Council announced by Pope John XXIII.

"The Baptist Churches, especially the largest Baptist group, the Southern Baptist Convention, USA, are opposed to any participation in the Ecumenical Council.

"However, the hopes which had been roused among ecumenical circles by the Pope's action, that a common Christian front, including the Roman Catholic Church, would finally emerge, soon faded away, when the Pope spoke of the necessity for Christians of other Churches to return to the bosom of the Roman Catholic Church. This rather damped the enthusiasm of churches which had expressed willingness to attend the Ecumenical Council in Rome.

"The ecumenical world was disappointed. The Moscow Patriarchate was right in ... saying that the Council arranged by the Pope would remain a purely Catholic affair."

Karev concludes his article by asking what really is the task of the World Council of Churches and the ecumenical movement it leads. His answer: "Not all the churches are members of the World Council. The Roman Catholic Church, representing 2/5 of world Christendom, declines to take part in the ecumenical movement. Of the sixteen Orthodox Churches, some belong to the ecumenical movement, but the most important of them, the Russian Orthodox Church, still holds aloof, although it sent two observers to the Central Committee Meeting at Rhodes in 1959. Among the non-participating churches there are also some Protestant churches, including most of the Baptist churches. A great drawback is the rather narrow Basis of the World Council of Churches - a consequence of the lack of ecumenical consciousness among the masses of Christians. Ecumenical enthusiasts are mostly found among Archbishops, Bishops, theologians and church leaders, whereas the national churches, the broad masses of Christendom are only to a small extent 'influenced by the idea of the one, universal Christian Church and by the ideals of the ecumenical movement'".

"A further weak point in the ecumenical movement are the unsolved differences of opinion on certain questions of dogma and Church order. One of the great issues is the difference of opinion existing between Baptists and Pedobaptists on baptism. It is a well-known fact that Baptists oppose infant baptism. They baptise only adults whose faith is based on personal decision; whereas Pedobaptists continue to practise infant baptism.

The ecumenical movement is also divided on the question of the breaking of the bread, or the Eucharist, both as to its significance and those who are authorized to administer it. That is why it was not possible to celebrate Holy Communion together at Amsterdam in 1948.

Unity is also needed in church administration and church order. The member churches of the World Council of Churches still preserve three different forms of church administration: Episcopalian, Presbyterian and Congregational. Hence the great tasks of the WCC in our time."

USSR Sputnik-Atheista

An important anti-religious book was published at the end of 1959 (Gospolitizdat, Moscow) entitled "Sputnik-Atheista". It is a symposium written by a group of atheists, including well-known authors like Kryvelev, M. Scheinman, etc. They are university graduates or students of Philosophy, History, etc.

"Sputnik-Atheista" means "The Atheist's Companion". This illustrated handbook of over 500 pages claims to be a guide to the different religions of mankind (totemism, animism, magic, belief in life after death, the confessions, the Church as the instigator of artificial class-distinction).

It describes Hinduism, Buddhism, Docism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity - Orthodoxy, Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, the Christian sects in the USSR (the Old Believers, Mennonites, Baptists, Adventists) and Mohammedanism. Christianity is dealt with specially from the aspects of "Communism and Christianity" and "Christianity and the Workers' Movement".

Explanations are also given about the Bible, the Talmud, the Koran, and the great festivals of the different religions.

The last part of the book contains discussions about "Science and Religion" (unsuccessful attempts made by the Tserkovniki, i.e. church-people, to reconcile science and religion) "Religion refuted by science", "the transformation of nature (by man) and religion"; "Church and State" (the Church in the capitalist countries and in the USSR); "the Communist Party on the Church and religion", "Communism and religious morality". The book concludes with the official texts of various statements made by the Soviet State and by the Communist Party about religion.

Phrases and ideas selected from "Sputnik-Atheista":

The Russian Orthodox Church has changed its original attitude to the Soviet Government (which was one of complete opposition), because it has realised that the Government has improved the welfare of the broad masses of the population. "At the same time the Church did not want to lose the support of the people". Another consequence of the change in the attitude of the Moscow Patriarchate Church to the Soviet Government has been that it was possible to liquidate the "movements for reform" within the Russian Orthodox Church after the death of Metropolitan Vedensky, head of "the living Church". But the normalisation of the relations between Church and State, especially in the years during the war of defence, do not mean that the Soviet State and the Communist party have abandoned their fundamental principle, which is opposed to religion and to the Church.

Today the Orthodox Church can no longer openly oppose progress, nor does it want to do so. It makes use itself of scientific achievement e.g. electric lighting in churches, motor-cars, films of services, etc. "The Church is trying to reconcile two irreconcilable things - science and religion." It does this by making use of what it calls "two facets of Truth" (dvoistvennaia istina).

"The Christian faith and science" says the Church, "have each their special sphere, and their particular aims." They are related to special aspects of man's spirit" (quotation from an article in the Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate"). Religion and science "have always existed side by side, and will always do so". If quarrels sometimes arise between them, "the reason is that religious truths are not all accessible to scientific thought and scientific interpretation, as soon as they touch on the supernatural ..." But "religion and science need not exclude one another."

On the Church's side these efforts to achieve a two-fold interpretation of Truth are expressed by saying that the biblical stories should not be understood literally, but in a symbolic sense.

With regard to the Church's social teaching based on the Gospels, it amounts to "a passive religious protest against injustice..."

The Christian Church has always supported oppression; it has never urged the oppressed to rebel, it has merely consoled them with the hope of a "miraculous salvation".

The Church's efforts to effect a rapprochement between religion and the new socialist order of justice and progress "must therefore be regarded with great caution". The progressive churchmen abroad who think on these lines include Hewlett Johnson (England), G. Endicott (Canada), E. Fuchs (DDR), who are valuable because "they testify to the powerful attraction of Socialism on progressive thinkers." Furthermore their way of thinking proves that "bourgeois socialism" is a sterile, weak form of socialism which has been diluted with Christianity.

This numerically small group of progressive Christian theologians is mistaken if it thinks it can bring about an ideal fellowship between Communism and "true Christianity". When it is maintained that "Communism restricts itself to the material liberation of the workers; whereas Christianity goes deeper and purifies man's spirit for life before and after death", this is not rue, "because it misunderstands the teaching of Marx-Leninism."

The ultimate purpose of Communism "is not merely to liberate man on the material level, but also to liberate him spiritually." It is therefore the task of Communism to see religion eradicated from society, because "Communism leaves no room for religion".

It is true, the Communists are fighting shoulder to shoulder with men and women of different views, atheists and believers, for peace and for the promotion of Socialism. But "this struggle can only be carried on under the banner of Marx-Leninist science, which is opposed to all forms of religiosity."

"Sputnik-Atheista" also reports on the international Christian bodies, including the ecumenical movement (see the remarks in this connection on page 17 in the present number).

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Page 20 of the present number also comments on "the legal position of the religious-church organisations" included in the Sputnik-Atheista.

USSR — Science and Religion

A new illustrated monthly atheist magazine, 'Nauka i Religion' (Science and Religion), was started last autumn, and several numbers have now appeared.

The new periodical, designed to spread atheist thought among the general public, is edited by P.F. Kolonitzky, well-known Soviet author of many popular anti-religious books and pamphlets (see p.25).

Each number follows the same lay-out:

A. A series of articles summarizing the contents, with headings as follows:

"An important factor in Communist Education" (Oct. 1959),
"The Victory of Man's Free Reason" (Nov. 1959),
"Letter from the Communist central party organ to the Third Congress of the All-Soviet Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge" (Febr. 1960), etc.

The importance of impressing on the minds of the masses the inadequacy of the religious view of life is stressed in each of the articles.

B. Then follow the different sections, divided into several main topics:

1) Man, the Ruler of Nature
2) The Truth about Religion
3) Questions and Answers
4) Letters to the Editor
5) Atheists at Work
6) Our Atheist Encyclopaedia.

Narratives, information, photographs and caricatures complete the picture.

1. The first section contains educational articles on:

"The exploration of the universe" (Answer: Man has left the cradle of his childhood, the earth, and now stands face to face with the boundless universe);

"The Conquest of the Universe" (Answer: Soviet sputniks and sky-rockets have become the symbol to all the nations of man's bold progress - which proves that man's reason dispels the mists of 'religious prejudice');

"God, the Bible and Eternity" (a differentiation between the religious concept of eternity and the materialistic understanding of infinite space);

"The Riddle that is Instinct" (Answer: we are not governed by instinct but by reflexes);

"Working in Siberia's Natural Reserves" (The technical conquest of nature in Siberia, in which religious-minded citizens also cooperate; their participation refutes the religious superstition about a divine plan in nature).

"Was there really a universal Flood?" (Anwer: No, the partial deluge caused by the flooding of the Tigris and Euphrates valleys was interpreted as a flooding of the whole world due to insufficient knowledge of geographical factors.)

"Man, Cybernetics and God." (Solution: According to the religious view, man cannot add anything to God's creation, whereas science and practice prove the opposite: the growth of man's power is unlimited. Man rules over nature).

"The Distinction between Animate and Inanimate Objects" (Modern materialistic science rules out all religious and vitalistic concepts of the nature of life and conveys a true concept of what life is.)

2. The second section deals with atheist-realist interpretations of present-day Catholicism, the Commandments of Jesus Christ, contemporary Islam and answers to questions like "Is God Love?", "God and Business", "Why Circumcision?", "Pastors Bestow their Benediction on War" (German Federal Republic).

The article on Christ's Commandments (author: I.A. Kryvelev) argues that the Bible contains many commandments which find their highest expression in Christ's Sermon on the Mount, where He apparently gives first priority to the commandment "Love thy Neighbour as thyself".

The essay entitled "Is God Love?" stresses the fact that "God's commandment of love proclaimed by some of our churches is anything but the Love of God". For "the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Love on earth is of extremely little interest to our theologians because they are constantly thinking of the life to come." Baptists are especially apt to think on these lines; "for them life on earth is merely a pilgrimage to life eternal". If according to Christian teaching God is Love, "then man can expect nothing else but pain and sorrow from this love".

Even if the Orthodox and the Baptists in the Soviet Union sincerely wish for peace, "they are still confronted with their fellow-Christians outside the USSR who promote cold war and are ready to drop deadly atomic bombs."

What can the Christian commandment of love really signify when Christ Himself has said: "I came not to send peace but the sword?"

3. The section on "Information" contains texts on "Communist China's Religious Policy" (The formation of a common political front with 'religious' citizens), "The pre-religious era in the History of Man" (Science and materialistic philosophy are the outcome of the growth of knowledge inherited from the time of primitive man, and of the maturing-process of human reason and man's increasing domination over nature; religion, on the contrary, draws exclusively on the concept of the supernatural).

4. In "Letters to the Editor" some of the following questions are answered: "Why do We need Religious Holidays?" (the writer's age is 70), "Why was the World Council of Churches instituted?" (Answer on page 17 and 19 of this issue).

5. The section on "Atheists at Work" is an appeal for the education of militant atheists. The paper insists on a systematic programme of subjects for atheist talks. Suggested topics:

"Dialectic Materialism as Theoretical Basis of Scientific Atheism", "Scientific Socialism and Christianity", "Morals and Religion" "Liberty of Conscience in the USSR", "Women and Religion", "How Religious Concepts are Eclipsed by Biological Science", "Religion and the Arts", "Soviet Literature in the Struggle against Religious Prejudice".

As regards the last topic, "Nauka i Religia" in its January (No 1), 1960, issue publishes an article on the great Russian humanitarian author, Dr. Anton Tchekov, born in 1860 (Orthodox), who was represented as a Christian in his time, "but who in reality had abandoned his belief in religion".

The question "Should We Engage in Disputes with Religious-Minded People?" was answered in the February 1960 issue:

"Disputes are unnecessary. Don't we have a grand organisation in the USSR which publizes the accomplishments of all branches of human knowledge, i.e. the All-Unionist Society for the Propagation of Political and Scientific Knowledge? Almost all its departments have working groups whose members may be rightly termed militant atheists."

6. The section "Our Atheist Encyclopaedia" deals with questions of "Hell" (it is non-existent), "The Bible" (its whole fallacious view of life must be rejected), etc.

A definition of theology: "Theology is a false ecclesiastical doctrine of God and His alleged supernatural substance in order to create binding dogmas and to fit them into a system. The characteristic trait of contemporary theology in the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches, etc. is the attempt to under-estimate scientific achievements and to give an arbitrary interpretation to natural phenomena and the life of man."

7. The narratives, reports, etc. include reminiscences and notes by well-known revolutionists and scholars like Darwin, K.A. Timiriazev, etc.

Illustrations and caricatures are conceived with skill. An especially noteworthy caricature depicts a meeting between God (a little old man with a halo) and a modern robot-man in his professional garb. God shakes his head and murmurs: "Very strange ... nothing left of my likeness."

The Ecumenical Movement as described in "Sputnik-Atheista"

"Sputnik-Atheista", one of the latest publications of atheist propaganda (see also page 12) contains the following passage on the World Council of Churches!

"As the crisis of capitalism grew increasingly acute, the desire increased in bourgeois society to set up centralised religious organisations on a world scale.

Side by side with the Vatican (the powerful international centre of the Roman Catholic Church) an organisation of Protestant Churches had to be created, which could be used by international capitalism for the purpose of undermining the revolutionary movement of the proletariat.

Thus at the beginning of the 20th century the so-called ecumenical movement arose within Protestantism, for the purpose of creating a united Protestant world-organisation.

In 1910 an "international conference of Christian missions" was held, in order to coordinate the mission work undertaken by the different Protestant churches. This mission work was an instrument in the colonial policy of imperialism.

Later on the International Missionary Council was set up, which has held regular meetings since. Its last conference was held in Ghana in 1957/58.

Simultaneously with the movement for unity in Protestant mission work, during the 1920's and 1930's steps were being taken preparatory to setting up a united Protestant headquarters with a broader programme of work.

The organisers of this movement, who included Archbishop Söderblom of Sweden, did not conceal the fact that the purpose of this Protestant world body was "to take suitable action with regard to the social, political and economic problems of the present time".

In 1948 at a Church congress in Amsterdam, whose purpose was to form a united front of the different Christian groups, the delegates from 147 Protestant churches in 44 different countries set up the World Council of Churches.

The second Assembly of the World Council of Churches, held at Evanston, USA, in 1954, was attended by delegates from 168 Protestant churches from 51 different countries.

The work of the World Council of Churches is financed by powerful capitalists in the USA, mainly by J. Rockefeller.

The headquarters of the World Council is in Geneva in a splendid château, that was purchased with Rockefeller's money.

Through the World Council of Churches the United States exercise pressure on the basic policy of the Protestant churches in different countries.

The World Council of Churches is a religious centre which is interested primarily in political matters.

The World Council is hostile to the democratic camp. It opposed the Stockholm Peace Conference's appeal for the prohibition of atomic weapons, and approved the imperialist aggression in Korea.

Apart from the Vatican and the World Council of Churches, there are dozens of other international organisations which are also tools of the reactionary policy of imperialism. The most important of them are: the Baptist World Alliance (founded in 1905 in Washington), the European Baptist Federation (founded in 1950), the Lutheran World Federation (founded in 1947), the World Methodist Council (founded in 1881), the International Congregational Council (founded in 1891), the Friends (Quakers) World Committee for Consultation (founded in 1937), the International Catholic Union (1946), The General Conference of the Seventh-Day Adventists (1863), the World's Alliance of YMCA's (1855), the World's YWCA (1894), the International Association of Spiritualists (1921), the Theosophical Society, etc.

All these religious associations are cooperating in the struggle against Communism.

After the second world war, representatives of the different confessions (which at one time had been in a state of feud with one another) have kept on holding conferences, in order to bestow their approval on the reactionary measures carried out by the imperialist governments. Efforts have been made to effect mutual rapprochement between the hierarchical dignitaries of Catholicism, Protestantism, and Judaism.

The late Pope Pius XII was constantly appealing for cooperation between the Churches. In 1952 he even sent observers from the Vatican to one of the world conferences of the World Council of Churches.

In 1957 Dr. Fisher, Archbishop of the Anglican Church, stated that the World Council of Churches would welcome the Pope as one of its Presidents.

But the Vatican continues to regard itself as the only true Church. And so do all the other Christian organisations.

The Roman Catholic hierarchy has not abandoned its plan to extend its complete authority over all Christians. Its readiness to cooperate with Protestants or other confessions is only a form of tactics.

A union between the different confessions is not possible, owing to the irreconcilable differences between Catholics and Protestants."

* * *

Another article entitled "Why was the World Council of Churches formed?" was published in the November issue of 'Nauka i Religia'. This article reproduces the points already cited and adds the following.

Why was the World Council of Churches formed?

This question is answered in the third volume (November 1959) of the new atheist monthly "Nauka i Religia" (Science and Religion), (see page 14). The paper describes the formation of the World Council of Churches and its development into a permanent international Christian body.

"As a result of the churches' concern for missions (Christian missions have always been a useful tool for promoting the colonial policy of the great powers), the Protestant churches were forced to form a closer union, in order to combat the growing movement of emancipation from religiosity and religious belief by employing new and more effective methods...

The Roman Catholic Church does not participate in this movement; very few of the Orthodox Churches do so either.

The decision was therefore taken already at the first Assembly of the World Council of Churches to invite the Roman Catholic Church (the Vatican) and the Orthodox Churches to join the ecumenical movement...

The Vatican refused this invitation, because it regards itself as the true Church of Christ, and can therefore not allow anyone else to assume the leadership of the ecumenical movement. The Vatican itself claims the pre-eminent role in the Church and in politics.

The Orthodox Churches, whose leaders attended the Moscow Church Conference in 1948, refused to participate in the World Council of Churches because the ecumenical movement is essentially Protestant, and because its present form is political and anti-democratic in character - which is contrary to the ideal of ecumenical Orthodoxy.

Thus in 1952 the World Council of Churches should have appealed to the United Nations to stop the war in Korea. It should have urged the governments to settle disputes by means of negotiation.

At the second Assembly at Evanston (USA, 1954) the American reactionaries did everything possible to maintain the old reactionary policy of the World Council of Churches. Press, radio and television were mobilised in the struggle against "atheist Communism", and over 500,000 dollars were spent for this purpose.

In spite of this hysteria of propaganda, however, some of the resolutions of the Evanston Assembly were positive in character, for instance the call to combat the war-psychosis, to prohibit nuclear and hydrogen bombs, and to solve international disputes by peaceful methods.

In November 1958 the Conference of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in America (many of whose leaders are also active in the World Council of Churches) passed a resolution, urging the government of the USA to alter its foreign policy, to recognise the principle of co-existence between nations, and to open diplomatic relations with the Chinese People's Republic."

USSR — The Legal Position of the Churches

(Taken from "Sputnik-Atheista" - Handbook for Atheists - Moscow, 1959)

Equal rights of all confessions

In the USSR all Churches, religious groups, associations and movements have equal rights, independent of the number of members or the size of their congregations. All these religious organisations owe their existence to the legal rights granted to them as free religious associations.

What is a religious association?

A religious association is defined as a local association of "believing" citizens who are 18 years of age or over, who belong to the same religious confession, are not less than 20 in number, and have formed an official association for the mutual satisfaction of their religious needs.

Citizens with religious views who are too few in number to form a religious association have the right to set up a "group of believers".

Purpose of the religious associations

The sole purpose of the religious associations is to hold religious services. They are not permitted to do anything else. Their activities have nothing to do with the scientific, cultural, professional or other special organisations for children, women, sport, etc. organised by the workers.

The distinction between religious and non-religious organisations

In the Soviet Union all the organisations except the religious organisations are associations of all workers, without difference of religious conviction or of nationality. It is not permitted to form associations of citizens based on their religious confession, apart from the approved religious bodies. A citizen can only be a member of one religious group. These associations, societies or groups can start their activities when they have registered with the appropriate governmental department.

Conditions for registration

For registration purposes a written statement is required, which must be signed by the members of the society (minimum: 20 signatures).

The financing of religious associations

All the religious organisations including their clergy live on the funds voluntarily contributed by their members. Collections may be made not only in the buildings where services are held but also outside; but collections must be confined to the members, and must be used solely for the purpose of defraying the expense of maintaining the church-building, paying the clergy, and similar expenses.

It is prohibited for a religious organisation to compel its members to pay certain sums.

The Church's income is free of taxation, but the salaries of the clergy are subject to the same rates of taxation as those of other citizens.

Further ordinances

Religious associations can purchase, rent or build buildings for the holding of services. They can also own their own means of transport and equip special workships for making objects used in worship or candles for use in churches.

To carry out the duties connected with the administration of church funds, responsible persons are elected from among the members at a general meeting of members, by open vote: 3 representatives for the executive organs of the larger religious associations, and one representative for each of the smaller groups.

The church-buildings and treasures of the different religious cults are placed at the disposal of the believers by the competent state authorities in accordance with the Agreement, free of charge, for the use of all believers. The latter are under an obligation to protect the treasures of the church, to undertake repairs on the church buildings which they have taken over and to defray all expenses connected with their use - but only for the satisfaction of religious needs. They are also responsible for making good any losses.

If the church-buildings are historic monuments of artistic and architectural interest, the state imposes an obligation upon everyone who uses them for religious purposes to preserve them.

Everyone who has signed the Agreement with the Soviet state authorities has the right to participate in the administration of church-buildings and church treasures.

The Agreements with the Soviet state authorities may be signed by any number of people belonging to the same religious association. This confers on them also the legal right to administer the treasures thus placed at their disposal. Anyone who has signed the Agreement with the state may also withdraw his signature at any time, provided that he informs the competent Soviet bodies beforehand. But this does not exonerate him from responsibility for the preservation and administration of these treasures up to the time of his withdrawal.

In a case where there are no longer enough people interested in using a church-building for the satisfaction of religious needs, the local state authorities must hang a notice on the church-door to that effect. If no statement to the contrary is received within a week, offering to assume responsibility for the building with its treasure, then the higher governmental authorities must be informed, and they will decide what is to be done with it.

If a church-building no longer conforms to technical and hygienic standards and is in danger of falling down, the local state authorities have the right to form a special Commission (including members of the religious association in question) in order to decide whether the building can be repaired or whether it must be pulled down. In the meantime no services must be held in it.

The restoration of church-buildings is undertaken at the expense of the church-members. During the building work no meetings are to be held in the building. If the building has to be pulled down, the Agreement concluded with the state authorities shall be declared null and void.

The question of closing churches

With regard to stopping the activities of religious organisations and closing churches, Soviet legislation requires that special attention be devoted to this serious question. The state authorities can only terminate the activities of a religious association if those activities are hostile to the state, for instance if they involve the refusal to fulfil the duties of a citizen, refusal to defend the motherland, refusal to participate in public elections, religious fanaticism, incitement to national hatred, and so on.

The state authorities can also suppress the activities of religious associations if such activities cause harm to Soviet citizens or are detrimental to their rights. This is why the Skopzy are prohibited, a sect which indulges in self-mutilation. Churches can only be closed in special cases, if the religious association has not fulfilled the terms of its Agreement with the state, if the church has been used for non-religious purposes, or if it is structurally unsafe.

In order to avoid arbitrary action on the part of local government bodies, the ultimate decision as to whether a church must be closed has to be taken by the central organs of the government. However, the local authorities can get a church closed by producing valid arguments.

The holding of religious services, and the setting up of religious objects is prohibited in all state, public, cooperative and other institutions, with the exception of the building specially destined for religious worship.

Services outside churches

Soviet legislation permits the holding of religious services in other places besides the special buildings destined for that purpose, at the special wish of people who are seriously ill or dying in hospitals and prisons. In such cases the religious service must be held in an isolated room. Religious rites may also be observed in cemeteries and crematoriums.

Public religious processions and open-air services are allowed if permission has been obtained from the local government authorities. This restriction does not refer, however, to religious observances connected with funerals, to processions which are an

inherent part of the service and which usually proceed round a fenced-in church building, no special permission is needed for these, as long as they do not disturb the traffic.

The clergy must restrict their activities to the district (large or small) in which the members of their congregation live.

Conferences

The religious associations have the right to organise meetings and consultations for clergy and representatives of church-members, and to appoint members to form executive bodies to carry out the decisions of these conferences. The initiative for convening such conferences may come from the religious associations and groups themselves, or from the executive bodies of the conferences. They may use special stamps and formulas, but no pictures or slogans, which are reserved for state bodies and state institutions.

Limitations

The Soviet government places everything necessary for the worship-service at the disposal of the religious and church organisations. It does not interfere in their religious life. But the religious organisations must devote themselves solely to religious activities. They have no right to interfere in state affairs.

The religious associations are not allowed to set up welfare organisations of any kind, nor to form youth groups or religious groups for women. They must confine themselves strictly to the holding of religious services. The organisation of excursions for children, the opening of libraries and reading-rooms, and the setting up of convalescent homes and hospitals by religious associations is also prohibited. The only books in the churches must be those needed for the service. (The sects often infringe these ordinances; they conceal the amount of income they have, and go in for speculation).

Soviet citizens cannot give or receive religious instruction except in private. Religious doctrines may be taught only in the special theological colleges provided for that purpose, whose curriculum does not include any general subjects. Religious colleges of this kind for training the clergy can be opened by all confessions, with the permission of the government bodies.

Theological students can study abroad

Furthermore, the representatives of the different religious movements are allowed to receive education in religious colleges abroad. Thus the young Mohammedans study at the Alkhazar University in Cairo, and the young Baptists at theological colleges in England. No lectures are given on scientific subjects in the theological colleges in the Soviet Union.

Religious publications permitted

The religious and church organisations have the right to print and publish religious literature, i.e. books for use in worship, church-calendars, church-newspapers and other religious publications. For this purpose printing facilities and paper are placed at their disposal by the state.

Monasteries and Convents

The religious associations are allowed to maintain monasteries and convents - like those belonging to the Orthodox Church at Zagorsk and Kiev (the Kievo-Petcherskaia-Lavra), the Roman Catholic convent at Aglon (Lithuania), and the Buddhist monasteries in the Mongolian autonomous Republic of Buriat. The state permits them to own land, cattle, agricultural equipment, workrooms (for the production of icons and articles used in worhsip).

(In this connection it should be remarked that this law is infringed in many monasteries and convents. The agricultural land owned by them is not always cultivated exclusively by the monks and nuns, but with the help of hired labour, which is not permitted.)

The State looks after the Church

All practical questions concerning religious organisations are settled by the "Soviet for Orthodox Church Affairs" and the "Soviet for the Affairs of other Religious Bodies", which are attached to the Council of Ministers.

There is complete freedom of conscience in the USSR. No pressure is brought to bear on citizens either to believe in God or not to believe in Him, either by the religious or church organisations or by the state. Every citizen is free to believe in a religion, or not to believe. Freedom of worship is guaranteed to all citizens, and also freedom to carry on anti-religious propaganda. But it is prohibited by law to hurt the feelings of believers. And the state administration must not interfere in the affairs of the religious organisations, as long as they do not constitute a danger to public order. No Soviet citizen is bound to give information about his religious affiliation or non-affiliation. With regard to membership of the Party, since the October Revolution the question of atheism arises in a new form. The 8th Party Congress required that every Communist must be an unbeliever, an atheist, and arranged for active anti-religious propaganda to be carried on among people who were not members of the Communist Party.

Members of the Communist Party cannot be believers

After the 8th Party Congress the majority of the Communist Party members carried through a political campaign of enlightenment, in order to liberate the broad masses of the people from the influence of religion. And yet in nearly every branch of the Party, some of the members infringed these rules: members have their children christened or get married in church, attend religious funerals, etc. Such a shaky attitude toward religion on the part of Party members was intolerable, from the point of view of the Party, for "religious convictions are incompatible with membership of the Party". The plenary session of the Party therefore decided already in 1921 that Party members occupying responsible positions must be expelled from the Party, if they regularly participate in the activities of religious organisations, which is contrary to the rules of the Party. Today these regulations have been considerable relaxed. Some Communists have stopped doing anti-religious propaganda and are adopting a conciliatory attitude towards religion and the Church. Some Communists even participate in big Church-festivals, forgetting that this is incompatible with the reputation of a Party member."

"It is a regrettable fact that individual Communists, especially in the villages, are often incapable of answering even the most elementary questions raised by believers concerning religion."

USSR "Man is freeing himself from the traces of the accursed past, from Religion"

The "edition of popular science" (Nautchno-Populiarnaia Biblioteka, the publishers for the Ministry of Defence) brought out a book entitled "Marxism-Leninism and Religion". The author is P.F. Kolonitzky, editor of the new atheist monthly "Nauka i Religia" (see page 14).

The cover-page depicts an officer in the Soviet army, giving his soldiers an address on religion and atheism. On the wall behind them is a red poster bearing the words, "Religion is the opiate of the people."

A brief foreword explains that this book is not intended only for the army, but for broad circles of readers in the USSR. Its purpose is to combat religious superstition, from which "the younger generation in the USSR as a whole has already been completely liberated in the spirit of scientific ideology." "Millions of older people who formerly believed in religion have also broken away from their religious convictions."

Nevertheless "these religious prejudices still survive in the minds of a considerable section of the population of the USSR even today." Not infrequently these "religious prejudices have flared up afresh". The revival of religious faith "began during the years of Russia's war of defence (against Hitler), as the result of anxiety about the fate of our country."

Furthermore "the capitalist world is still trying to support religious prejudice as a means of spreading bourgeois propaganda among the Soviet people."

* * *

It is a mistake to be neutral in one's attitude to religion, as widely advocated as a result of the historic victory of Socialism and of Marxist-Leninist ideology, and of the liquidation of the bases of religion (based on class). It is also a mistake "to think, that religion today is doomed to die out."

"Religion has reaped the benefit" of the relaxation in atheist propaganda. Another important fact is "that as a result of the victory of Socialism, the Church in the USSR is no longer hostile to the Soviet state, but has become loyal in its attitude towards it." By doing this "the Church has strengthened its influence on believers and created more favourable conditions for spreading religion."

* * *

People enquire, "Is not the fact that leading churchmen are among the most active pioneers for peace a proof that religion in our country has changed, that it has ceased to be a reactionary ideology?"

Answer: "It is true that many activists in the Church are fighting for peace in order to fulfil their duties as citizens. It is also true that for some time the Church has changed its attitude to the Soviet régime. But in spite of all this religion is still a reactionary ideology" ...

"The most honourable and far-seeing activists in the Church participate in the struggle for peace not because religion imposes this duty upon them, but because they want the wishes of the believers to be fulfilled. In itself no religion imposes any obligation upon people to struggle for peace."

The members of the Church (continues Kolonitzky) have ceased working against the Soviet régime for other reasons also.

"Contrary to the affirmations made by the chorus of bourgeois nations, the Soviet state has never restricted or curtailed the activity of the Church, as long as the Church did not overstep the limits of the freedom of worship allowed to it. The most honourable church-members have loyally observed these limits from the outset, i.e. ever since the Soviet régime was constituted."

* * *

It was a different matter when, during the crucial years when Socialism was first being established, the Soviet government was obliged to take steps against the counter-revolutionary elements among the "Tserkovniki" (church-people).

These counter-revolutionary forces in the Church were not treated as church-members but as enemies of the Soviet people, i.e. as counter-revolutionaries who were fighting the rise of Socialism with armed weapons ...

Even positive acts of the Churches, therefore, are no justification for religion as an ideology.

"In the present transition-period between Socialism and Communism the struggle against religion cannot therefore be struck off the agenda ... for this struggle has become particularly important today."

* * *

Question: "Why, then, are no restrictions placed upon the activities of the Church? Why are the Churches allowed to have their own newspapers? Why they still run schools and colleges? If religious ideas do not disappear unless they are firmly resisted, and if they are detrimental to the cause of Communism, and the education of the workers in Communism, how do you explain the tolerant attitude of the Socialist state to the activities of church-members? They are bound to strengthen religion. What is the use of closing an occasional church, or prohibiting religious functions in that case?"

Answer:"These objections do not do justice to the Marxist-Leninist view of the ways in which religion can be overcome. In the struggle to suppress religion, administrative measures are not merely futile, they are harmful. So far from helping believers to free themselves from their religious prejudices, they prevent them from doing so ..." For "religion will never yield" to prohibitions or restrictive measures. And what is still more important, such measures are contrary to the spirit of social democracy, to the policy of the Communist Party and of the Social State. "Our socialist state as a genuine democratic order expresses most fully and consistently the interests, desires and feelings of the Soviet people."

It is well known that "there are religious people among the Soviet people too. As religious people, these believers have other personal interests in addition to the general interests of the Russian people as a whole. They want to be able to pursue their religious customs, and their worship-services, in accordance with their religious convictions and concepts from which they have not yet liberated themselves. Can the genuinely democratic Soviet state ignore their wishes? No!"

* * *

One of the most important features of the Soviet Constitution is ..."that it does not confine itself to formulating the rights of citizens, but also stresses the question of guaranteeing those rights ... This is often not the case in the Constitutions of bourgeois states, where the law exists only on paper."

It is obvious what would happen if, despite the fact that freedom of worship and freedom to carry on anti-religious propaganda are guaranteed by the Constitution, the churches were to be closed.

"In the USSR religion is a personal matter for the individual citizen ... In our country (unlike the bourgeois countries) we observe the principle that the Church is not to interfere in state affairs, nor the State in the affairs of the Church ... Any discrimination between the rights of citizens on account of their religious affiliation (or non-affiliation) is inadmissible."

Although "our socialist State guarantees freedom of religious worship, that does not mean that it approves the religious activity of the Tserkovniki (church-people). But the criterion for the socialist State is the wishes and feelings of all the workers, including those with religious views. By its very nature, the socialist state cannot allow any restrictions on the rights of the workers. As long as we still have believing people among us who on the whole are honest supporters of the socialist order of society, so long due account must be taken of their religious desires and feelings, and of the activity connected with them - as long as these do not overstep the limits of religious worship."

We must not forget that all the workers,"both believers and non-believers, share a common concern: the struggle for freedom from the yoke of capitalism, the struggle for the establishment of communism."

* * *

"Attempts have always been made, and are still being made, to drive a wedge between believers and non-believers." But for the workers it is more important "to have common convictions about the struggle for real happiness (in this world) than to have a common faith in a mythological, heavenly paradise." That is why the cooperation of all the workers - believers and unbelievers - in the struggle for liberation from the yoke of capitalism and for the establishment of communism is so important for the Communist Party."That is the first task, which takes precedence over the struggle against religion (atheist propaganda)."

Seen in this light "the propagation of atheism seems superfluous, even harmful" inasmuch as "it tends to split the workers into two camps (believers and non-believers) and thus to weaken them for their common struggle".

* * *

The most important concern is the maintenance of peace in the world. Nothing is as important as unanimity among all the progressive forces in the world in order to maintain peace, and prevent further warfare.

The Communist Party stresses therefore that "the struggle for communism and for peace is more important than anti-religious propaganda"; it therefore teaches "that the campaign against religion must be continued with methods which do not weaken that primary struggle, but which rather strengthen the moral-political unity of Soviet society ... under the banner of Communism."

It is a lie if the opponents of Marxism represent this situation as if "the campaign against religion were necessarily bound up with the struggle against believers." In reality the Communist Party refuses to sanction lack of confidence in believers as Soviet citizens; more than that, "it strictly condemns any such lack of confidence." The slightest restrictions of the rights of religious-minded Soviet citizens are contrary to the policy of the Communist Party in religious matters." While it openly stresses the incompatibility of its own ideology with that of religion, the Communist Party insists on consideration being shown for the feelings of religious-minded workers."

Lenin already declared: Marxism conducts the struggle against religion with ideological methods, and only with such methods. The Communist Party holds strictly to this rule of its founder and leader. The propagation of scientific and political knowledge, quiet criticism (on a scientific basis) of religious ideology, the popularisation of the great achievements of science, technics and socialism among the workers, and the explanation of their conclusions for atheism - that is the line to be taken by the Party in order to combat religious prejudice. "The process is rather a long one, but it is the only way which is sure of success."

Scientific atheist propaganda had made mistakes, such as "prematurely closing churches and chapels in some places, without the consent of believers." But atheist propaganda has suffered from the observance of religious holidays, which "in many cases are observed more from tradition than as the outcome of belief in God."

USSR Russian Sects

"Voprosy Filosofii" (No. 1, 1960), official paper of the Academy of Sciences, following an enquiry directed by Professor A.I. Klibanov in the Tambov region (Central Russia) last year, reports on small religious groups and sects existing side by side with the recognized Christian churches in Russia.

Extreme sects have always existed in this region: the Khlesty and Skopzy, Adventists, Sabbath Christians, etc. and, though decreasing in numbers, they still survive.

Two smaller groups of Orthodox tradition have also developed, although the Russian Orthodox Patriarchate still exercises a dominating influence of course. These two groups call themselves the "Truly Orthodox Christians" (I.P.Chr.) and the "True Orthodox Church" (I.P.Z.).

"During the last few years (1948-50) the members of these two Orthodox groups have actively engaged in evangelism among the population, taking advantage of the difficulties caused by the shortage of personnel, to propagate socially harmful ideas among the faithful (i.e. urging them to leave the kolchoses) and to win followers for their own churches."

The I.P. Christians believe in the millennium. Their numbers have decreased because they proclaimed a ban on marriage. However, many of their young people have married all the same and take part in different forms of public, collective work.

The I.P.Z. group had a similar fate. It is not very active today, and some of its religious fanatics, remnants of the reactionary clergy, lead a secluded life withdrawn from the world.

"Voprosy Filosofii" thinks that the reason why the influence of these "sects" is declining is the improvement in the general standard of living. All the same, they have succeeded in influencing a lot of young people, as is proved by the case of Lidia Turovskaia who refuses to work in a kolchose.

"The facts collected by the research team lead us to the conclusion that these two groups are not connected with the traditional type of sects. Their attitude rather reflects, though in a slightly modified form, the views of Monarchist members of the Church who broke away from the Patriarchate following an appeal to support the Soviet government."

The basic articles of faith of these schismatic groups are Orthodox in tradition. (The Orthodox Church, however, is not recognized and its priests are labelled "Servants of Antichrist"). They oppose collectivisation, basing their arguments on "the line of thought traced by the late Patriarch Tikhon". I.P. Christianity is also penetrated by monarchist ideas from the past.

Both groups are awaiting the end of the world, but the world first has to pass through "our present era, the era of anti-Christ". Hence their refusal to take part in public affairs. It also explains why they object to military service, to State loans and to the state education of their children.

Visits from members of the Orthodox Church of the Patriarchate are not welcomed, partly because of quaint religious customs, as for instance long services, sometimes occupying a whole day, by the reputed "Holy Springs". Here "former high personalities, some of whom claim to be members of the family of the Tsar, and charlatans of all kinds play on the religious feelings of Christians." However, these phenomena have decreased of late.

"The psychology of these people and of other sectarians", says "Voprosy Filosofii", "enables us to draw important conclusions for the struggle of Atheism against religion."

USSR — Modern Theology and Science

I.A. Kryvelev, the well-known protagonist of atheism in the USSR, has just published a new book entitled "Contemporary Theology and Science" (Moscow, 1959).

Explaining the reason why he selected theology, especially contemporary theology, for research, the author states:

"One must know one's opponent thoroughly. That is an important rule in every form of struggle, including the ideological struggle". If one wants to combat religion, one must be acquainted with the arguments put forward by its adherents to "protect religious teaching from aggressive science."

Although nearly all the churches emphasise that their dogmatic systems are infallible (they are all claimed to be so perfect and so absolutely true that they require no modifications or improvements), in reality the theologians are obliged in their struggle against the ideology of science "not only to re-shape and modernise their arguments, but also to make considerable changes in their dogmatic constructions".

Kryvelev wants to show his Soviet readers how theologians are proceeding today, in face of modern scientific achievements. "How are the ideologists of religion reacting to the tremendous achievements of modern science, what ways and means are they seeking in order to make science 'harmless' and thus if possible to prolong the existence of religion?"

Space prevents us from giving a complete summary of the book, as contained in Kryvelev's preface to it. It may suffice to select a few names from those mentioned by Kryvelev (not all of whom are or were theologians) who influence theological discussion today. In addition to contemporary theologians, he mentions Aristotle, Galileo, Jules Verne, Hegel, Darwin, Henri Bergson, Dostoievsky, Berdiaev, Etienne Gilson, Benedetto Croce, and also Saint Augustine, Gregory of Nyssa and others.

Among the contemporary theologians and other writers mentioned are Karl Barth, Emil Brunner, John Baillie, Walter van Kirk, [illegible] Wobbermin, Harnack, Heiler, Henry Charles F. Howard, Howlett Johnson, Jacques Maritain, Henry Morris, Otto Pfleiderer, George Tyrrel, J.G. Fraser, Leslie S. Hunter, E. Schlink, and others.

Several pages are devoted to the theology of Karl Barth. Kryvelev writes: "Among the Tserkovniki (church-people) today there are men with all kinds of different political tendencies, and different attitudes towards the great questions of our time. It would be a mistake to regard all these men as supporters of political reaction."

"Karl Barth, and Metropolitan Nikolai of Krutitsi and Kolomna (Moscow) are both progressive in their attitude to public affairs. We respect and sympathise with them in their struggle for peace, and for their valuable contribution towards establishing international cooperation. But this does not by any means remove the fundamental differences of opinion concerning principles and ideology which separate us from those who defend these forms of religious-idealistic ideology." For instance, when Barth states that "faith does not become faith merely through human experience, because the source of faith is not to be sought in man's personal experiences, but beyond them, in God, who awakens man's faith", one has to ask oneself, "What proof is there, that this faith is awakened by God? Is it not rather the product of an uncontrollable imagination? ... It is impossible to prove it. It is simply a case of wanting to believe it."

This is what is ultimately taught by the Church, and by the dogmatics of the Church. This is why Roman Catholic theologians like Angelo Perego (Italy) or G. Kung (Germany) express their esteem for Karl Barth by granting him recognition (in so far as his views coincide with the doctrine of the Roman Church).

Kryvelev does not accept Karl Barth, although the latter quotes the words of the Bible, "Lord, I believe, help thou my unbelief!", admitting that he cannot prove his faith, and that he himself does not really believe, but that he wants to believe and has to believe. (Faith is not possible without unbelief).

"Why did Barth's unbelief turn into faith?" asks Kryvelev, since Barth "recognises the truth of the scientific theories?"

Although Barth declares that he is "not a mystic, nor a rationalist" (in order to dissociate himself from Protestant modernism), nevertheless "as an apologist for the Christian religion he is one of the mystics who force reason to commit suicide and drive people into the arms of a crazy, blind faith at the mercy of religious propagandists."

Some of these mystics "regard their chances as considerable". Others are more cautious and seek a solution in "clever, sophisticated tacking in order to preserve a middle course in their interpretation of the achievements of science."

In this way they are able to adopt science as if its achievements were their own, until "nothing is left of real science, and the anti-scientific concepts of religion retain an appearance of truth."

"The struggle between religion and science is therefore relentless."

So everyone "who keeps out of the snare of religious casuistry" can be certain that "whatever theology may teach, it will only deepen the gulf between religion and science."

USSR

Should I join the Church?
Questions and Answers

'Literaturnaia Gazeta' (Moscow, March 5, 1960) was asked to publish the following letter by a Russian girl who signed herself 'Lida':

"Dear Editor,

Would you please publish your answer to the following query in your next issue? In 1959, I finished ten years of schooling. At the moment, I am not engaged in any particular studies but would like to devote my time exclusively to Church work. Please do not think I am saying this for lack of anything better to do. That certainly is not the case. But it seems to me that I might be misunderstanding certain things, as I have never had any desire to join the Church before. I am sorry about that, but what can I do? I must admit in the depth of my soul that there is a God.

Please let me know what you think about this. Perhaps you can show me the right course to take. I am not ashamed to think that everybody will read this. Lida."

The letter was answered in 'Literaturnaia Gazeta' by the well-known author V. Tendriakov (see "Miraculour Icons" in "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches" No 4, 1959). His article concentrates on explaining a series of pictures of priests and nuns published with his own comments.

"Isn't it deplorable", says Tendriakov, "that Lida's teacher in the course of ten years has not been able to impart to her either an elementary education or the most elementary thinking capacity, or even the faintest idea of our Socialist philosophy? All the same, we should like to answer your letter, Lida, and to discuss the aim you have set yourself."

"One can live merely to eat, to have a comfortable bed, a roof over one's head, a warm stove, to satisfy one's own desires without thinking of other people. But young people more than anyone else genuinely feel the need for self-sacrifice and an honest desire to serve a useful purpose. You too, Lida, want to devote yourself to a good cause. Possibly you believe that with the help of God you will be able to evoke honest, honourable and other noble qualities in people's souls. And you may well say: Why can't I be useful in the special field of activity I have chosen?"

"Without dwelling further on this point, let us look behind the scenes into the lives of those who serve God."

Tendriakov then launches his comment on ten pictures of Orthodox Church officials in different spheres of activity.

The first picture shows nuns at the Vedensky convent in Kiev "lost in prayer and reverently praising God". The next two pictures are of the convent and its Abbess Eleutheria, who in 1941 (picture 4, facsimile) at the time of Hitler's occupation of the Ukraine, thanked the Nazi authorities "in black and white for liberation from the Bolchevist barbarians" and asked them to "return to the convent its

entire fortune". The result was that the convent was returned to the nuns, while the families of those fighting against Hitler were turned out in the streets. Picture 5: an elderly nun humbly offering consecrated bread to the faithful.

"In December 1941 the same Abbess Eleutheria with the same servile attitude offered consecrated bread to Erich Koch, Commissar in the Reich, and asked him to send Hitler a telegram with good wishes for his birthday"...

"Lida, just look closely at the face of this old Abbess, who cringed before men who had ordered women and children to be shot in the 'Babij Jar' in Kiev, who knuckled under subserviently to our enemies and who is now trying to live at peace with us and probably has no hesitation in eulogizing our Soviet régime. Look at her face and think whether a person with all that on her conscience would have a good or bad influence on her fellow-men Just think about that."

Picture 6: An old monk in Kiev selling costly candles to the faithful, who have a hard struggle to earn their living at all. "The proceeds from the sale of candles and holy oil raised the income of the Lavra (Abbey) in Kiev by 2½ million roubles in 1959, whereas no figures are shown in the accounts under the heading 'Income from work done by monks'.

Picture 7: A former chapel now serving as a garage for the Lavra. "This chapel standing in the holy grounds of the Lavra (Abbey) should be a sacred spot to Christians. During the war did not Christians protest whenever the enemy used churches as stables? 'Church robbery, blasphemy', were the expressions they used. But if instead of enemy soldiers it is the Director of the monastery, Bishop Nestor, who uses the chapel as a garage - the holy community of brethren think it is quite natural. The Bishop has a clear conscience and "he quietly sits down (next picture) in his 'Volga' car, (bought with the money of the faithful) to go about his holy affairs."

The next two pictures represent two strong, healthy-looking men. The first, instead of working properly, serves the Bishop, and the second, after two unsuccessful marriages, is a member of the executive board of the Lavra "so that he can use his own wealth of experience in life to point out the right way to others".

And finally says Tendriakov:

"We have only just glanced at the world you are aiming at, Lida. Look at the last picture (several nuns). A black gathering, with not a single person creating anything of value either material or spiritual. Do you really want to be one of them? Where would you prefer to be: among the workers or among the parasites supported by the Church until history sweeps them off the face of the earth?"

Miscellaneous :

USSR — Icon Business

A young man enters the tea-room of the Hotel Metropole in Moscow. Instead of sitting down and ordering a cup of coffee, he passes from one table to another offering for sale a picture of the Holy Mother and Child.

"Now, it is not the custom in the USSR to do business in tea-rooms," writes P. Neverov, a captain in the militia, author of an article with the above title which was published in "Komsomolskaia Pravda" (No. 300, 1959). "I could not help wanting to know more about this vendor of holy goods."

He wasn't a travelling monk, or an apostate priest, but Alexander Babelian, student of History at Moscow University, in his fourth semester, and a member of the students' komsomol. "Why had he reverted to this ridiculous, antiquated trade? He was out for money."

"I have bought these icons from a speculator", the student said to me, "and he told me I could exchange them for foreign clothes." So "this future teacher of history runs about in Moscow hoping to acquire a pair of darned socks or an old coat off a foreigner's back."

Is it really so difficult for Babelian to buy socks in a shop? Not at all. His parents are in secure positions. His father is assistant to the administrative director of the Ministry of Transport, and his mother teaches at a ballet school. They could easily provide new socks for their son. But Babelian wants bright-coloured foreign socks. He thinks they will give him 'personality' and make him stand out among his fellow-students.

Babelian has only one icon for sale. His comrade, Oleg Grigorovitch, however, decided to do business on a large scale. He bought 5 icons and displayed them in his suitcase in front of the Tretiakov art gallery.

Said the crafty Grigorovitch: "What's wrong with the idea? I've never heard anyone say that a member of a komsomol wasn't allowed to buy icons."

The icon-pedlar then passes over to the attack: "Your insinuations would be justified if I believed in God. However, I don't, and the fact that I have bought the icons from an old woman in front of a church doesn't mean that I am a bad member of the Komsomol."

"Oleg is really only pretending. He knows quite well the difference between good and bad. What's wrong with him is his polluted soul. For the sake of vile profit he violates his own conscience, and stains his honour and his personal dignity."

Neverov's conclusion: "Alexander Babelian and Oleg Grigorovitch quite enjoy being members of the university and of their komsomol. But will the komsomol continue to tolerate them within its ranks?"

USSR

Divorce on Religious Grounds

Anastasia Arsenjeva, who comes from Kalinin and is the mother of two little children, has decided to divorce her husband because he is an atheist.

"I love God better than my husband", she told the judge who was trying to effect a reconcilation.

"Look at the mess into which this woman has been brought by the tserkovniki (Church people)", writes "Literaturnaia Gazeta" (No. 16, 1960).

"Can such a fanatic be allowed to bring up her children?"

"If Anastasia Arsenjeva (who is said to have neglected her children) does not change her mind, the people and the public education authorities will have no other choice but to have the children brought up by the State."

A similar case had been reported in Kalinin where the State had to take charge of two little boys whose family had "fallen a prey to religious fanaticism". "Literaturnaia Gazeta" continues: "It is interesting to note that several neighbours appeared before the comrades' court to plead for Anastasia. However these people did not speak in defence of the family (i.e. the children), but claimed Anastasia's right ... to religious freedom! She certainly has this right. But she has no right to ruin the lives of her children. The strife between atheists and Christians has now extended to Anastasia's home in Sakulino near Kalinin, where religious prejudice still prevails."

This means that the case of the Arsenjeva family has become "a matter of public concern".

"Public opinion", says the "Gazeta","is a powerful instrument in dealing with religious survivals, when used with intelligence and skilfully manipulated."

"The Constitution of the USSR guarantees liberty of religious convictions to Soviet citizens. But when members of religious sects violate the standards of our Socialist order, when they harm children, cause tragedy in their families, etc. such things cannot be tolerated."

"W.I. Lenin in his 'decree on the separation of Church and State and of Schools from the Church' purposely stressed the Soviet citizens' right to combat religious obscurantism."

"The free practice of religious customs is guaranteed as long as it does not violate public order or curtail the rights of Soviet citizens."

"Local government bodies, in cases where these rights are violated, are free to take all necessary measures to safeguard public security."

The functions of public bodies and local government authorities in combating religious prejudice are clearly set out. They include not only militant atheist propaganda but also the defence of civic rights and public security.

However "Literaturnaia Gazeta" does not say whether a divorce has been granted.

USSR — Christening Ceremony proves fatal

A son was born to the Martchenko's at Magnitogorsk, the great industrial city East of the Ural Mountains.

Their religious neighbours thought that little Vova ought to be properly christened. "He will be all the happier for it".

Finally the parents were persuaded and took Vova to the Orthodox Church at the far end of the city. I. Chtcherbatov, was the priest responsible for performing the ceremony.

In accordance with the Orthodox rite, he completely immersed the baby's body in the font.

What happened then? The child could no longer breathe and it was drowned.

The parents' grief was great. But neither their remorse at having consented to the christening, nor the sympathy of their friends, could bring back the baby which had "fallen victim to a senseless act."

The outraged inhabitants of Magnitogorsk then demanded that the culprit should be brought to justice. The people's court where the case was tried was filled to the last bench.

The priest tried to deny the charge. "The child was sick", he cynically declared; "it would have died in any case."

The audience was outraged. Chtcherbatov's guilt was proved both by the parents and by the inquest; the doctor's certificate confirmed that the child had been in perfect health, and that the cause of its death was suffocation through drowning.

The public prosecutor quoted other cases where religious rites had proved detrimental to people's health. The audience expressed satisfaction at the sentence passed on the priest: three years' imprisonment.

USSR — God caricatured in "The Crocodile"

Moscow's satirical weekly, "The Crocodile" (No. 6, Febr. 29th, 1960) presents the following caricature on the title-page:

Three young people - two men with a woman between them - are kneeling in front of a holy picture in an Orthodox church. A mouse peeps out from a hole in the wall just underneath the icon, and in the background an old man and an old woman (the past generation) look on while the others pray. The caption reads, "O Lord, please send at least one anti-religious lecturer to our district."

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USSR — "Monastery Bells"

The Easter edition of "Trud" (organ of the All-Russian Central Council of Trade-Unions) contains an article entitled "Monastery Bells" (Moscow, 17th April, 1960, No 92). The title refers to the bells of the Russian Orthodox monastery "Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra" at Zagorsk, near Moscow, where scandalous things are going on, according to W. Strelkov ("Trud"'s correspondent). He brings all sorts of accusations against this famous old Russian monastery:

1) According to him, drunkenness and disorderly conduct are permitted among the monks and students (the Theological Academy and Religious Seminary of Moscow are attached to the monastery).

2) The monastery has enriched itself by selling ordinary drinking-water (the springs at Zagorsk have been famous for centuries for their quality) and oil at tremendous prices, thus deliberately profiting by speculation.

3) The monastery has given refuge to some people who were being sought by the police.

4) By buying up anti-religious literature, the monastery has infringed the freedom of anti-religious propaganda (legally guaranteed in the USSR), and thus broken the Constitution.

The article in "Trud" concludes: "Hasn't the time come to put an end to all this?"

The accusations made against Zagorsk monastery are supported by the following facts:

1) Drunkenness and debauchery at the Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra. Drunken priests, monks and students stream out of the house of Bobrussov at night. "These holy men (many of whom were so drunk that they vomited) were shouting and hooting words which really cannot be repeated here. The neighbours woke up and saw the drunken hooligans in priest's garb; once again the police had to be called"

Zagorsk is a flourishing, modern industrial town with a palace of culture, clubs, cinemas etc. But just outside it stands this hotbed of obscurantism (Mrakobesie) - the Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra with about 250 theological students, teachers, priests and monks.

And these hypocrites are not content to confine their activities to their monastery; they extend their hooliganism into the town of Zagorsk. The brothers (including M.N. Rumianzev who is not duly registered) organised a drinking-party in the station restaurant at Zagorsk. These carousals also went on in private houses ... The whole thing reeks of dishonesty, speculation and deception, and it is poisoning the lives of the workers in Zagorsk. The religiou swindle factory is running at full pressure.

A brother named F. who has left the monastery states: "They all spend whole nights in drinking and debauchery." We cannot quote his letter, because some of the expressions in it would not pass the censor. "And yet devout pilgrims kiss the hands of these beastly priests and ask for their blessing."

Some of the students have come to Zagorsk (more or less) by chance, and some of them cannot stand the life in the Seminary. Valentin Ukhim went out of his mind, and Kudiuk committed suicide.

2) The Chapel of the Sacred Spring (Nakladiznaia Tshasovnia) has a silver tap crowned with a gold Cross, from which the holy water flows and is collected by the believers in all sorts of vessels (including old vodka bottles) and then used for drinking and washing. While the water is being given out, the Priest Mina Gorbatov reads prayers and squints out of the corner of his eye at the people.

"Why is this water called 'holy'?"we asked Mina Gorbatov, who was filling bottles with it and stuffing his pockets with thick bundles of notes, throwing the small cash into a collection-box. "The water comes from a sacred spring", he replied. "Where is this sacred spring?" No answer from the priest, who took refuge in his breviary.

"This 'sacred spring' is nothing but the ordinary water supplied by the town council of Zagorsk; this is certified by the technicians responsible for the sanitary conditions of the monastery. So the holy fathers make a lot of money out of the town water-scheme." They sell this ordinary water and enrich themselves with the proceeds

Another source of revenue is the sale of oil for the icons. The monastery has a monopoly to sell this vaseline, for which the believers stand in queues. It is real vaseline, but the price demanded for it is extortionate. The priests purchase it from the pharmacies at prices fixed by the state, in order to sell it to the believers at a fantastic profit. "Deception, corruption, speculation". A man called Seniushko and another called Maslov state that they have supplied hundredweights of oil to the monastery, including cycle-oil.

3) The Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra has given refuge to some asocial elements including criminals, also to men who wanted to escape paying alimony. Leonid Lionin, who is now a monk, was formerly a thief; and I. Kossolapov and A. Petshugin entered the monastery in order to avoid having to pay alimony. When the women concerned appealed to the monastery, they were told, "These men are now monks who have renounced the world, so they can't pay anything. Go, and God will help you."

The monastery is full of idlers, prophets, healers and saints. For instance there is Ivan Riashovsky, a specialist in hysteria, who cures sick people with the Sacraments and with holy water, in accordance with the old Shamanic rites. Riashovsky has not done a stroke of work for years, but he has a nice house in the Samchoz settlement.

4) "Trud" also accuses the students of (systematically) buying up anti-religious literature, so as to prevent its being disseminated among the people of Zagorsk. For instance, the atheist paper "Nauka i Religia", books by the atheist author Jaroslavsky and other atheist books were unprocurable on the book-stalls, because they had all been bought up.

In this way the whole population of a town was deprived of anti-religious literature.

The Soviet Constitution guarantees freedom of worship (to believers) and freedom of anti-religious propaganda (to non-believers) "By buying up all the anti-religious literature in the town, the members of the Orthodox Church have therefore gravely infringed the Soviet Constitution."

The Troitse-Sergieva-Lavra is also accused of administering the monastery, which is an ancient monument of Russian culture and a state reserve, without due regard for the interests of the state; "the holy fathers have played at being the masters here, and have altered the architecture of the monastery, thus failing to keep the principle of maintaining it as a historic monument." The inmates of the monastery even went so far as to lock up the state archives of art, which are under the authority of the Ministry of Culture.

The article concludes by saying, that in the Soviet Union the Church is divided from the state, and must not interfere in state affairs, or public life. "But the obscurantists in the Lavra influence people outside the monastery walls, and pollute the pure Soviet air." "Hasn't the time come to put an end to all this?"

USSR — Atheist "enlightenment" of School-children

The "Utchitelskaia Gazeta", (a publication for teachers in the USSR) publishes a short article in its number of April 15th entitled "Advice from Atheists", describing how to exert atheist influence on school-children. The article reads as follows.

"A schoolgirl called S. comes to one of our teachers. 'I'm bringing you a letter', she says, 'it's a holy letter that I've copied to please my grandmother.' It is a muddled letter written by an uneducated person, promising 'great luck to anyone who copies it and sends it to nine other people.' Failure to do so would bring 'terrible misfortune' on the recipient. The letter contained a lot of nonsense."

What were we to do about it? We were all convinced that we must improve the atheist enlightenment of the children. We decided to organise anti-religious lectures for the older children, and to have talks with the younger ones, either individually or in groups.

We started an Atheists' Association whose members were all teacher They gave lectures on "The Origin and Nature of Religion", "The Cosmos", "Is there a God?", "Did Jesus Christ really live?", "The scientific earth-satellites (sputniks)" etc.

Some of these lectures were also given by the older pupils. For instance, a lecture on the evil effects of superstition was given by a pupil in the top form. His explanations aroused keen interest; they even caused a quarrel. The children told their grandfathers and grandmothers about it at home, many of whom still believe in God. Then the Komsomolszy (members of the Communist Youth Association) decided to organise more lectures of this kind in the village.

Our first anti-religious evening for young people was entitled "Is there a God?" and invitations were sent to boys and girls in the 7th to 10th classes, their teachers and parents. The pupils had prepared chemical experiments in order to disprove the biblical myth that there are "miracles".

The power of the atheist lies in being well-informed on all subjects. That is why we have started a scientific-atheist seminar for the members of our Atheists' Association.

USSR — A reply to Ossipov

In December 1959 the Moscow papers "Prawda" and "Isvestia" published a statement from A. Ossipov, in which he explained why he had left the Russian Orthodox Church. A reply has now been published by an Orthodox priest in Paris. It is reported that a new book by Ossipov has been officially announced in the Russian bibliographical review for 1960.

For over 20 years A. Ossipov was a priest of the Russian Orthodox Church and a teacher at the Religious Academy in Leningrad (see "Current Developments in the Eastern European Churches, No. 1, 1960). The reply from the Orthodox priest in Paris is published in the edition "Maison Russe Sainte Geneviève des Bois", which every two months publishes a "Chronicle of the Russian Orthodox Church in Western Europe". This Chronicle is published by a congregation which is part of the Exarch of the Moscow Patriarchate in Western Europe.

How could Professor Ossipov lose his faith? the author begins by asking. Only a short time ago Ossipov was one of the teachers of the Russian Orthodox Church. Was he lying then, when he was still instructing students in theology?

"You were not lying", the Chronicle continues; "if you had been lying, you would indeed have been the wretchedest man in the world."

No, Ossipov could not have completely lost his faith in Jesus Christ, especially as the name of Christ is not mentioned at all in his statement published in "Prawda".

"The circumstances which you describe, under which you left the Church, give the impression that you have not renounced religion once and for all ... As a gifted person, you will have to face tragic shocks" for "even if your faith was only as large as a grain of mustard-seed, it was still faith."

Although Ossipov declares that "his faith has gradually dwindled out", nevertheless it is still smouldering "in the depths of his soul".

Ossipov is then asked "why he had cast mud at the Church" by talking about "the self-seeking, narrow-minded caste of priests", and so on. No one in the Church "had attacked Ossipov" when he took his decision. Does not Ossipov give the impression of being like the Sadducees in the past, whose pride prevented them from being "members of the Church, and servants of Jesus Christ"?

Why didn't Ossipov leave the Church already in 1955 or 1956, when he was helping to prepare a new edition of the Bible?

Ossipov accuses the Church of deceiving its members. But why doesn't he accuse himself of having deceived the Church, which was even paying him for it?

"You were exposed, and you openly went away ... to look for another job", continues the letter. But if Ossipov's second wife had been a Christian "she would have prevented him from leaving the Church."

"When you (Ossipov) say, that Christians who don't live according to their faith are not Christians, you are quite right. But as you know, people are not always completely capable of living up to a great ideal. You say that as far as you are concerned now everything is settled; but it is not settled." For "it is still possible for you to meet Christ ... and the Church will not cease to pray for you ... No, you are not a Judas. You fell into temptation and lost your self-confidence. Perhaps you never really loved God, nor Jesus Christ, but only a philosophy about God or about the reality of the spiritual life".

You say, you have lost your faith "since everything found its right place in your life" ... Isn't it rather the other way round - that everything is out of place?

"If, as you say, you think God is an oppressor (an expression which I have heard, as I am a doctor in mental hospitals, adds the priest in Paris) that it is a good thing that you have given up work which you found degrading. But there was no need to make such a fuss about it."

"As your students explained to you, when you left you did not need to join the atheists - were you entitled to say what you did in your letter to the press? The students were right, not you, because the students cannot make use of the press as you can.

But the Church has the advantage over atheism: "it has the prayers of the believers. As long as they continue to pray, and as we know their numbers are increasing, the Church is invincible. Compared with that, all discussion between naive atheism and a naive Christian faith is of no importance." "You say that reason is opposed to mysticism and hence to religion; but thousands of scientific thinkers think the opposite. Who is right? Was it not said of Christ, that the people marvelled at his understanding and his wisdom? The same is said of Christ today by many great scholars and learned writers."

USSR — Soviet writers as authors of Historical Novels

Soviet literature includes some historical novels which depict the history of Russia in the most charming light.

Among these books Serge Borodin's novel "Zar Dmitry Donskoi" stands out, because the preface emphasises the importance of the Russian Orthodox Church on the historical development of the Russian people.

The action of the novel takes place in the 14th century, during the struggle against the rule of the Tartars. It was due to a large extent to the Church that Russia finally succeeded in shaking off their yoke.

The book is written in the style and spirit of the Russian Orthodox Church.

It was finished already in 1940, and has since appeared in several new editions, including "Prawda" in Moscow. It is available not only in Russian but also in Lithuanian, Latvian, English (Hutchinson, London and New York, 1942/44, and Peyerson, Toronto, 1947), Danish, Bulgarian, Czech and German. Altogether over two million copies have been published. In addition the novel has been published as a serial in several newspapers, of which the "Novel-newspaper" in Moscow has the widest circulation.

In 1942 the Stalin prize was conferred on Borodin for this book.

One of the great contemporaries of Dmitry Donskoi was Sergius of Radonesh, who was later canonised by the Orthodox Church. Due recognition is paid to him in the book. The introduction contains an illuminating remark:

"The political history and the military history of the Russian state were indissolubly bound up in the past with the activity of the Church, which played an extremely important role both in peace and in war.

The Church continued unswervingly to extend its influence, and developed into a power with which the Princes had to reckon. This is shown by the actions of the Russian Princes who, beginning with Ivan Kalita, set out to try and subjugate the Church to their own authority, i.e. to establish "an alliance between the Cross and the sword under the aegis of the sword".

Borodin, who has made a special study of the 14th century, could not ignore this important question. In his novel, therefore, in addition to the characters of Dmitry Donskoi and his followers we also meet Russian people of every class, enemies of Russia, the commander of the Golden Horde (the Tartars), and the sharply-defined leaders of the Church.

Mention is constantly made of Alexius, the Metropolitan of Moscow (a passionate advocate of the union of all Russia), and of his successor Mitai who was made Metropolitan in accordance with the will of the Grand-Duke of Moscow.

The reader learns "the dramatic story of how Cyprian, the emissary of the Patriarch of Constantinople, was enthroned as Metropolitan of Moscow". We meet the inmates of the monasteries and the priests of the Russian Church "carrying out their difficult task in a land under the domination of the Tartars."

The author describes the policy of the Tartars towards the Russian Church. He gives a detailed account of Mitai's visit to the Tartar capital of Sarai Berke, in the effort "to give a true picture of the role of the Church and its place in the national struggle for the liberation of Russia". This is the main interest of these pages, devoted to the Church's way of action, in which the personality of St. Sergius stands out conspicuously. "Sergius is described without false idealisation". In Borodin's eyes, Sergius is important mainly "as a living expression of the progressive social efforts of his time."

Marx and Engels teach that "the thought of the ruling class has always been the criterion; the class which has the most material power in society also has the leadership in matters of thought."

The ideological attitude of Sergius of Radonesh "clearly expresses the programme of the ruling class of his time and the mentality of the Czar Dmitry Donskoi."

This may be explained by the fact that "in ideological matters the Grand-Duke of Moscow regarded Sergius of Radonesh as his most loyal ally."

In the struggle to throw off the yoke of the Tartars, the Czar Dmitrij Ivanovitch had recourse to the help of the Church. He exploited the authority of the Church in order to kindle the spark of patriotism "which smouldered secretly in the hearts of the simple people of old Russia. By working as true servants of the Church for the idea of Russian unity, and thus expressing the sense of Russian nationality which was gradually consolidating, they came forward to defend the progressive political programme."

A Soviet appreciation of the novel says: "Borodin's merits thus consist in boldly facing the difficulties which confronted him as an artist and historian" and thereby "bringing a breath of fresh air into the treatment of mediaeval Russian history" by "giving due prominence to the part played by the Church in the struggle against the invasion of the Tartars, as shown in the life of Sergius of Radonesh."

Furthermore "the author of 'Dmitry Donskoi' has introduced an essential correction into the official version of this period of history which was current before the October Revolution." This correction shows us a completely new understanding both of the influence of St. Sergius (here the author bases his conslusions on Soviet historical research) and of his spiritual character (oblik).

In both these respects the author's efforts have been well worth while. One relevant extract from the novel says:

"The Princes might quarrel with each other, one state might rebel against another, but no one in Russia would have dared to oppose the Church. The power of the Metropolitan of Moscow extended over the whole of Russia and over all the Christians living there, including the Golden Horde."

It was a well-known fact that Metropolitan Alexius wanted Sergius of Radonesh to succeed him as Archbishop. But no one understood why Sergius refused to accept this, the highest position in his Church. "Sergius was not 'a fool of Christ' (Iurodivy). He did not humble himself unnecessarily, as some other men did who lived in strong stone houses and donned hair shirts bound with a cord when they went among the people."

After the death of Metropolitan Alexius, the Czar Dmitry needed a successor who could appeal to all the Russian Princes in the name of the people of Moscow. He was indefatigable in trying to persuade St. Sergius. "No, Prince," Sergius replied, "I am trying to bring about peace in Russia through faith, not through secular power. Don't lead me into temptation."

Another time, Prince Dmitry begged Sergius in the hour of danger, "Father, help us, pray for us and illumine our path!" Sergius replied, "It is not in my power to do that; God alone can illumine and sustain thee and us. God is thy shield and protector. Hold fast to Him. But my prayers and my thoughts will be with thee always."

Sergius advised Dmitry to welcome Cyprian, the emissary from Constantinople, as Metropolitan of Moscow.

The novel gives an impressive and realistic picture of the spiritual life of St. Sergius of Radonesh.

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